FIRE ENGINEERING

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Buffs Provide More Than Canteen Service on the Fireground

BY R.L. NAILEN
Staff Correspondent

Canteen service is not the only fireground help buffs may render. There are few of us who haven't dragged hose, or hooked up lines, to help out a shorthanded company. Though buffs are seldom present in sufficient organized numbers to act as auxiliary fire companies, there are notable exceptions—as in Atlantic City, where a buff group forms a trained reserve with its own apparatus.

More often, buffs are trained in first aid, often through Red Cross programs. San Francisco's Phoenix Society members, for example, are all first aiders. In mid-1973, the head of that group and one of its past leaders were named co-chairmen of the local Red Cross chapter's disaster survey committee. (One member actually in the medical profession, Dr. Don Cheu, has been cited for his outstanding work in emergency first aid.)

One important task of such workers at major fires is arranging temporary shelter, clothing, and food for homeless residents. In New York City the Third Alarm Association and other buff groups render similar help to 1500 or more families annually. Box 8 buffs of St. Louis assisted Red Cross Disaster Services in April 1973, when that area was hit by its worst flood ever, with more than 17,000 residents evacuated. The Central Connecticut Fire Buffs, of Hartford, assist with both first aid and crowd control at multiple alarms.

Obviously this can be of great help in relieving a fire chief of direct involvement outside his own sphere. Fire department personnel themselves sometimes benefit directly. Some months ago in Toronto, at a third-alarm fire where several fire fighters became casualties, members of the Box 12 buff club were able to help transport burned and injured men to hospitals—with fire department permission, of course.

Training for such work goes on continually. At regular club meetings, buffs learn the procedures from many local agencies (including the fire service). Here are just a few of the matters taken up at buff gatherings during recent months in various cities:

1. The "acute loss syndrome"—grief symptoms and psychology of disaster victims.

2. Disaster survey planning and paperwork.

3. Slide show and critique of disaster drills.

4. Operation of civil defense emergency service, with tour of county CD facilities.

5. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation techniques—3-hour course with examination and certification.